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ABSTRACT

Two of the essential ingredients of institutional quality are the recruitment of quality staff and the systematic evaluation of all staff. To be effective, evaluation must be supported by the governing board, must be conducted by competent administrators with histories as superior teachers, and must be based on clearly defined personnel policies and procedures. Illinois Valley Community College (IVCC) offers an example of an effective evaluation system, which since implemented at the college more than a decade ago, has been steadily refined. The system has significantly enhanced the quality of instruction through the termination of ineffective faculty and staff and through the promotion of quality performance by the staff who remain. The IVCC system involves the following characteristics: (1) all tenured and non-tenured, full-time and part-time faculty are evaluated; (2) the board sets evaluation policy; (3) faculty evaluation begins when new persons are hired; (4) faculty are evaluated through direct classroom observation; (5) evaluation is conducted at the beginning of the term; (6) faculty are evaluated only by administrators, rather than by students, peers, or themselves; and (7) merit recognition of outstanding faculty efforts is a part of the administrative evaluation system. By removing poor instructors and rewarding excellent instructors, IVCC has improved its total faculty and instruction for its students. (The paper includes a list of suggestions and considerations regarding teacher dismissal.) (AYC)

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ASSURING FUTURE QUALITY:
REMOVING INCOMPETENT FACULTY

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Presented at the 66th Annual National Convention of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, Orlando, Florida, April 14, 1986.

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ASSURING FUTURE QUALITY: REMOVING INCOMPETENT FACULTY

By
Dr. Alfred Wisgoski
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The quest for quality must permeate an institution. It requires a dedicated and knowledgeable Board of Trustees, supportive of administrative decisions based on Board policies designed to create a climate of excellence. The essential ingredients of quality are:

1. Commitment of Board and Staff to Quality
2. Recruitment of Quality Staff
3. Systematic Evaluation of All Staff

The selection of staff must begin with a commitment to an open search - something that should be axiomatic - for all new and replacement faculty, administration, and support staff. Indeed, openness is employed in every search for every position, full- or part-time at Illinois Valley Community College. This enables the college to recruit the best candidates available without political considerations, patronage, or Board of Trustees pressure. At Illinois Valley Community College, the open search is a Board policy in which the selection process is entrusted to the administrative staff.

The third essential ingredient to insure quality is an effective evaluation system.

The need for an effective evaluation system was succinctly summarized by the National Commission on Excellence in A Nation At Risk. The commission stated: "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might have viewed it as an act of war." The national outcry for improved instruction has resulted in legislation mandating evaluation of instructors as a means of improving the quality of education. Even faculty unions have succumbed to public pressure for evaluation.

Illinois Valley Community College's system of administrative evaluation has become a model for many of the community colleges in Illinois, and has begun spreading to other states and some of the

Canadian community colleges. The system is the subject of a book entitled Evaluating For Excellence authored by Dr. Hans Andrews.

FOUNDATION OF AN EFFECTIVE EVALUATION SYSTEM

There are several components that are absolutely essential to effective evaluation. These include:

1) A Board of Trustees, that is, a governing Board, must support the need for evaluation, and the system used to effect the evaluation,
2) Competent administrators who have personal histories of providing superior teaching , should be responsible for evaluating,
3) Tenure appointments must be reserved for only the very best, quality instructors. Do not tenure average and below-average faculty. In fact, if there is any doubt, it is better to risk error and deny tenure.
4) The Board and administration must work as a team, being mutually supportive.
5) There must be clearly defined personnel policies and procedures which are known to everyone.

It should be noted that Illinois Valley Community College has a qualifications handbook that precisely describes the prerequisites for teaching every course the college offers. Every faculty has had his credentials evaluated vis-a-vis the prerequisites, and knows what courses he/she is qualified to teach. These qualifications are regularly reviewed as faculty complete additional graduate studies or other professional experiences.

Once a faculty member is qualified to teach, he/she becomes certified as competent through the evaluation process described. The policies used may preclude faculty who have not upgraded their qualifications from teaching specific courses.

The purpose of the evaluation system is to improve the quality of instruction. Illinois Valley Community College believes the success of its students after transfer or gainful employment, offers evidence of the quality of instruction provided by its staff.

TENURE DOES NOT INSURE A LIFETIME OF ACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE

It has been recognized on most college campuses that tenure does not insure a lifetime of acceptable performance. The need to terminate tenured instructors is a reality on most campuses.

When it becomes necessary to terminate a tenured faculty member:

1. **Do so reluctantly.** Keep in mind that a life and career are at stake.
2. **Do so as a last resort.** From both a legal and moral standpoint, there is much to do before dismissal is considered. At Illinois Valley, dismissal is considered only after the Division Chairman, the Associate Dean of Instruction, and the Dean of Instruction, have each determined, by independent evaluation, that the individual's classroom instruction is inadequate.
3. **Do so after the individual has been given a detailed explanation** of the nature of his inadequacies.
4. **Do so after the individual has been given adequate time** -- typically one to two years -- to enlist the expertise of peers, supervisors, and other resources of the college to improve instruction.
5. **Do so, when, at the end of the period of remediation, the individual has still failed** to raise the level of his/her performance to acceptable college standards, in the opinion of the Division Chairman, the Associate Dean of Instruction, and the Dean of Instruction.
6. **Do so after the President and the Board of Trustees have agreed** with the assessment.
7. **Do so when a law firm specializing in school law has reviewed the case** in detail and issued an opinion that dismissal of the instructor has a strong likelihood of being upheld in court.
8. **Do so when the instructor has declined to accept** early retirement, voluntary transfer to a college assignment that does not involve classroom teaching, or resignation.
9. **THEN** -- you notify the person of his dismissal and the reasons therefor, being careful to observe the correct form and the deadlines imposed by the laws of your particular state.

Illinois Valley has been forced to terminate several tenured and non-tenured faculty, including individuals who had many years of experience (up to 28 years of teaching experience). (See Table I).

No system of faculty evaluation can be effective without positive promotion, recognition, and reward of quality instruction. It should be clearly understood that the vast majority of evaluations, 85 to 90%, will result in positive outcomes, and will be appreciated by the faculty so recognized. Many of the faculty will wonder why you waited so long to evaluate the college's most important assets -- its faculty.

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

At Illinois Valley Community College, significant emphasis is placed on faculty development. Funds for attending state and national conferences, training to upgrade technical faculty--sometimes amounting to $2,000 to $4,000 for an individual--are assigned high priority. The faculty frequently returns from these opportunities and report they receive greater support than their colleagues from other colleges.

Merit recognition, in the form of commemorative plaques and small monetary awards, are given annually to faculty evaluated as outstanding. The college has granted over 30 such recognition awards the past seven years. It is significant to note that not one faculty or staff member has declined a merit award, even though the college is highly unionized, having been affiliated with the AFT for several decades.

Evaluating for excellence requires a dedicated and knowledgeable Board of Trustees, supportive of administration decision based on Board policies designed to create a climate of excellence. Approving a "Notice To Remedy" or firing an incompetent faculty member will test the amount of pressure Board members are willing to accept in their commitment to excellence. The pressure will be there.

At Illinois Valley Community College, the initial turmoil has given way to organized and institution-wide efforts to enhance the total quality of the college. Faculty support is apparent in (1) its increasing willingness to be regularly evaluated, and (2) its increased pursuit of professional development. All personnel, probationary and tenured, are systematically evaluated.

RESULTS OF I.V.C.C.

EVALUATION SYSTEM 1980-1986

FULL-TIME

1. 96 - Evaluated Positively Granted Tenure or Continued on Tenure
2. 12 - Tenured "Evaluated Out" or Fired
3. 13 - Non-Tenured Removed Before Tenure

PART-TIME

1. 110 - Evaluated Positively
2. 16 - Part-Time Not Brought Back
3. 3 - Part-Time Removed Part Way Through Semester

Illinois Valley Commuity College offers a case study of an effective evaluation system. The evaluation system, evolutionary in nature, introduced to the college more than a decade ago, has been steadily refined. Application of the system has significantly enhanced the quality of instruction. It has resulted in the termination of ineffective faculty and staff through resignation, early retirement, and outright dismissal. More importantly, the impact of the system is most apparent in the quality performance of the staff that remain. It has motivated the staff to consciously improve the quality of instruction.

The positive educational impact on potentially thousands of persons yearly within each community college district is too large a stake to gamble with by colleges that are willing to settle for less than a quality education.

EVALUATE TOTAL FACULTY

Illinois Valley has a systematic administrative evaluation system for all of its faculty. This includes all full-time tenured as well as non-tenured faculty. It includes all part-time faculty as well. This may come as a surprise because many of the colleges studied have completely ignored their part-time faculty when it comes to evaluating their performance. Yet, many colleges employ more part-time than full-time faculty. They may provide from 15-20% on up to 55-60% of all the instruction that takes place on the campus or in extension centers. They are often persons who may never have taught classes to students prior to working for the community or technical college. They often need more assistance and help than full-time faculty.

BOARD POLICY - ALL FACULTY WILL BE EVALUATED

One way to get started is for a board policy that calls for <u>all</u> faculty to be evaluated by their administrative supervisors. This gives the board a policy that can be evaluated. It also provides the thrust for the administration to carry out their responsibilities to quality control its most valuable assets, the faculty on the staff.

HIRING

Evaluation of faculty can and must begin when new persons are to be hired. Illinois Valley has had about a 47% turnover of full-time faculty over an eight year period. Albert Shanker, executive director of the American Federation of Teachers, predicts a 50% turnover of faculty nationwide during the next ten (10) years. Hiring new persons should be a tremendous challenge! It should also be viewed as a way to improve your college.

DIRECT OBSERVATION

The only way Illinois Valley administrators measure the quality of classroom instruction is through direct classroom observation. This is done for a non-tenured faculty member no less than six times the first year and at least four times each of the next two years.

WHEN TO EVALUATE

Evaluation of both new full-time and part-time instructors should be done early in the semester or term. Later in the semester may well be too late. The college has salvaged many part-time and several full-time faculty by evaluating and helping them improve through early evaluation follow-ups.

Colleges that use student evaluations usually wait until the end of a semester or term to evaluate. This is too late to correct problems, poor teaching techniques, or to assure coverage of subject matter in a clear and logical manner.

Why is Illinois Valley so sold on the administrative system of evaluating faculty? One reason is that it is the only one that is accountable to the student, board, and faculty members.

The following is a summary of some of the research that is available on the other types of evaluation systems used by colleges and universities:

1) Student;
2) Peer; and
3) Self evaluation.

STUDENT RATINGS

Dr. John Centra, in his study of student evaluation, concluded two things:

There is a "positive bias" that may make it impossible for

1) teachers who need to improve to recognize their weaknesses, and

2) those teachers who are lenient graders may not improve learning, but be rated better than good teachers.

Student evaluations are also anonymous. Students do not sign their name and are not in any other way accountable for the removal of poor faculty members. They cannot and are not called to an arbitration hearing or courtroom dismissal hearing. Who would you call?

ON "PEER" EVALUATION

Dr. Centra also summarized some key points on "peer" evaluation systems. This is where one faculty member evaluates another. He found several key points in the research:

1) He found colleagues to be very generous in their ratings of each other;

2) He found 94% being rated either "excellent" or "good", this was even more favorable than student evaluation;

3) Peer ratings also were found to carry a vey low statistical reliability.

You can see why he feels such a system casts doubt on the value of this type of evaluation system.

Self evaluation, where a person evaluates himself was even worse.

KEY RESEARCH NOTE

In a review of 13 years of the Yearbook of School Law, not one case was found where a faculty member was fired or where peer or student evaluation was even noted as part of the reason leading to the firing of a poor faculty member.

There were, however, numerous cases where administrative evaluation, properly carried out and properly documented, led to dismissals of poor faculty. A number these were tenured faculty.

Andrews also found that mixing types of evaluation does not lead to removal. Some colleges have negotiated evaluation into their faculty contracts and put weights on how much each type of evaluation will count. Mixing of student, peer, and administrative evaluation will not lead to removal of incompetent faculty.

MERIT - PART OF AN OVERALL PLAN

Shifting to the other end of the administrative evaluation system, one finds a place to recognize outstanding faculty efforts.

Merit recognition should also be part of a comprehensive plan. It should not be accomplished in a vacuum if faculty are to respect such recognition efforts by the governing board and administration.

One of the Illinois Valley faculty members wrote last year:

> "As you know, I have just received a merit award from the college, which was both a surprise and an honor. What a perfect way this is for the college to say 'we appreciate what you are doing.' Nothing can be more revitalizing for a worker than for your employer to say 'nice job.'"

The college is proud of so many of its faculty. It is proud that it have been able to "revitalize" a number of them. The college has faculty involved in workshops all over the country in humanities, fine arts, and high technology, to name but a few. Several have been supported through sabbaticals, leaves of absence, and teacher exchange efforts.

Illinois Valley Community College thinks the outcomes it is achieving can best be presented in Table II. What may be considered a "normal curve" of faculty members is shown at the left side. By removing the left hand tail (poor instruction) and rewarding those faculty on the right hand tail (excellent instruction), the college has improved its total faculty and instruction for its students.

RESULTS OF IVCC EVALUATION SYSTEM 1980-1986

The overwhelming majority of the college's faculty have come through the administrative evaluation system in fine shape. The college has, however, had a number who did not for a number of reasons. All of those who were unable to stay with the college were given 18 months to two (2) years to improve their performance and continue to be evaluated for improvements.

What the college learned?

1) It has learned that to run quality community college takes a dedicated board of trustees and a competent, but fair administration. It must have both board and president support, or not get into this type of system.
2) It has learned to expect resistance (by a few).
3) It has learned that good to excellent faculty wondered why it took so long to upgrade the teaching for students; and it has learned that with improved instruction, the students improve.

INTENDED OUTCOME OF FACULTY MERIT SYSTEM: A "POSITIVE SKEWING" OF TEACHER PERFORMANCE.

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